

NOTES 14: P-VALUES AND SIGNIFICANCE

Stat 120 | Fall 2025

Prof Amanda Luby

Last time, we laid out the following steps for setting up a hypothesis test:

1. Formulate hypotheses in terms of population parameter
2. Collect data and compute a sample statistic
3. Use the sample statistic to make a claim about the hypotheses

Today, we're diving into step 3:

- 3a. Construct null distribution
- 3b. Compute p-value
- 3c. Make a decision about H_0

0.1 For our study on F's

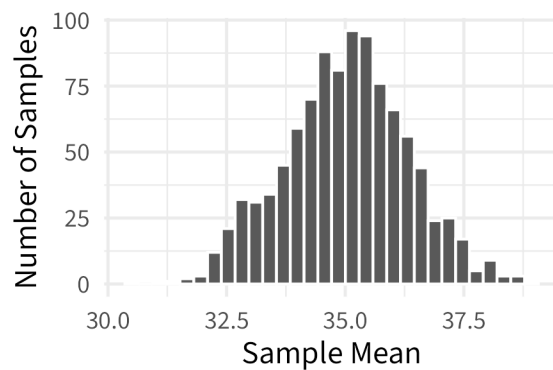
Population parameter: μ

Sample statistic: \bar{x}

$$H_0 : \mu = 35$$

$$H_A : \mu < 35$$

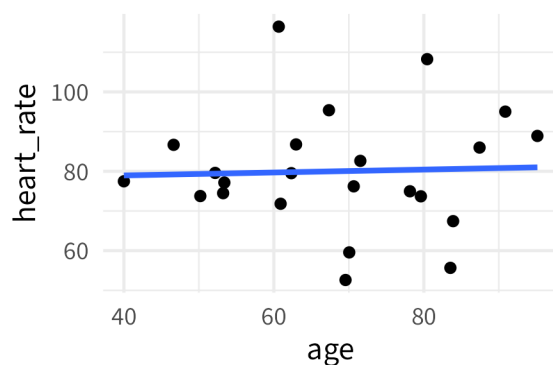
Null Distribution:



How do we construct a null distribution?

StatKey Example: In a random sample of 765 adults in the United States, 322 say they could not cover a \$400 unexpected expense without borrowing money or going into debt. A journalist claims that this is evidence that the overall proportion could be 50%. Is the journalist justified?

R “Paper” Example: A public health researcher believes that there is a positive relationship between heart rate and age among ICU patients. Data from 23 patients gives $r = 0.037$.



```
# A tibble: 23 x 2
  age heart_rate
<dbl>     <dbl>
1  70.7      76.2
2  87.4      86.0
3  67.3      95.4
4  80.4     108.
5  95.1      88.9
6  60.7     116.
7  83.9      67.4
8  79.6      73.7
9  90.9      95.0
10 62.3      79.5
# i 13 more rows
```

```
library(CarletonStats)
permTestCor(heart_rate ~ age, data = icu, alternative = "greater")
```

```
** Permutation test **
```

```
Permutation test with alternative: greater
Observed correlation between age , heart_rate : 0.037
Mean of permutation distribution: -0.00652
Standard error of permutation distribution: 0.2069
P-value: 0.413
```

```
*-----*
```



R Example: In a pre-Musk Pew Research Poll on social media use, 72% of Twitter users ($n = 346$) responded that they visited Twitter a few times a week or more. Among Instagram users ($n = 530$), this number was 80%. Is there a difference in frequency of use between Twitter and Instagram users?

```
permTest(visits ~ app, data = social_media)
```

**** Permutation test ****

Permutation test with alternative: two.sided

Observed statistic

instagram : 0.8 twitter : 0.7197

Observed difference: 0.08035

Mean of permutation distribution: -0.00025

Standard error of permutation distribution: 0.02929

P-value: 0.004



1 Statistical Significance

Significance Level

Statistical Significance

Formal Statistical Decisions

2 Summary

Whenever performing a hypothesis test, you should:

- (1) Perform an appropriate EDA
- (2) Formulate H_0 and H_A
- (3) Compute a test statistic
- (4) Construct a null distribution
- (5) Compare the test statistic to the null distribution and compute a p-value
- (6) Make a decision (reject or fail to reject) about H_0
- (7) Report your conclusion in context